

## **Some Highlights/Headlines from the September 2002 Progress Report to the W-2 Advisory Committee**

1. **Informed choice.** The Department's shift in W-2 program emphasis from "light touch" and "diversion" to "informed choice," is now more uniformly reflected in W-2 policy and in program-related documentation.
2. **Consumer choice.** The Department has committed to three inter-related structural changes in Milwaukee service delivery—the Open District, the Employment System Access Coordinator, and the Independent Participant Advocate—in order to provide for more (and more informed) consumer choice for Milwaukee W-2 participants.
3. **Time limits and extensions.** The Department has thoroughly reviewed W-2 time limit, clock-ticking, and extensions policies to ensure those for whom an extension may be appropriate are not discouraged from seeking one, and to provide for improved procedures for monitoring and re-review of cases near their time limit and of requests for extensions.
4. **Barriers assessment.** The Department is field-pilot-testing a new tool for assessing clients for functional barriers to employment, on the way to finalizing the tool, establishing best practices for its application, and automating it through a web based application—all in expectation of statewide implementation in January 2003.
5. **W-2 education and training.** The Department has increased the number of aggregate education and training hours allowed under W-2 policy, from 258 hours in a six-month period to 516 hours over a one-year period and provided guidance to W-2 agencies on enhancing education and training opportunities for W-2 participants through existing programs and policies.
6. **Education and with part-time work.** The Department has obtained funding for two pilot projects under the Welfare-to-Work program and the Workforce Investment Act to assist working families to receive training while working part time.
7. **W-2 payment cycle.** The Department has committed to changing the W-2 payment cycle from monthly to semi-monthly, and to incorporating that change into the overall strategic plan for creating a new web-based work programs automation system as part of the Village projects.
8. **Medicaid pay for in-home family care.** The Department is teaming up with DHFS and the Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy in seeking federal DHHS Secretary Thompson's intervention to permit Medicaid payments to parents for personal assistance services they render to MA-eligible family members.
9. **Hard-to serve W-2 clients and low-income workers.** The Department has several initiatives under way aimed at improving inter-divisional collaboration (e.g., between DWS and DVR) as well as collaboration between local W-2 agencies and the business community to improve services to hard-to-serve W-2 clients and low-income workers.
10. **Transportation assistance.** The Department has clarified its policies on transportation assistance and is actively pursuing efforts to coordinate that assistance to W-2 clients and leavers through such programs as the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance program (WETAP) and JobRide.